



**HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 06.21.2005

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HFD PARTICIPATES IN NATIONWIDE “STAND DOWN”

In the first four months of this year, there have been 50 firefighter line-of-duty deaths (LODDs) in the U.S. – 10 more than at this same time last year. In response to this alarmingly high LODD rate, the International Association of Fire Chiefs is calling for all fire departments across the country to “stand down” from non-emergency duties on June 21, 2005, and continue the “stand down” until all work shifts have been covered.

To help ensure that “Everybody Goes Home”, the Houston Fire Department, in conjunction with the IAFC, IAFF, National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, the United States Fire Administration and at least 14 additional organizations, will “stand down” on June 21, 22, 24, and 25 to cover all four shifts.

The purpose of the “stand down” is to raise firefighter awareness of the need for increased vigilance toward safety and impress on members that the fire service cannot continue to do business as usual when so many of our own are dying in the line-of-duty. If this trend continues, there will be over 1,000 firefighter funerals over the next ten years. Since the Houston Fire Department became a paid department in 1895, 59 paid firefighters and one volunteer have died in the line of duty, including five since 2000. (Feb. 14, 2000 – Firefighters Smith and Mayo, Oct. 13, 2001 – Captain Jahnke, April 4, 2004 – Firefighter Kulow, and Feb. 19, 2005 – Captain Burke). HFD has had 220 reported injuries January- March of this year, most of which were minor, heat related or not involving an incident.

During the “Stand Down,” all non-essential activities will be postponed, except for scheduled training and districts, stations, and crews will gather together and discuss ways to increase firefighter safety.

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In observance of “The Stand Down Day”, HFD’s Val Jahnke Training Facility located at 8030 Braniff near Hobby Airport, will be hosting a two-hour Firefighter Safety Awareness Training Program in conjunction with Texas Engineering Extension Services (TEEX) from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. tonight for members.

Some of the topics that will be covered during this program will be: reason for stand down, line of duty death (LODD) statistics, health and safety standards, fire ground safety, personal protective equipment, apparatus and equipment, infectious disease, physical fitness, training and behavioral health.

Recently, HFD has purchased equipment which will benefit firefighter safety. Some of this equipment includes:

- High-visibility (orange) 1¾ inch fire hose to all Engine companies. This is due to one individual member having the initiative to forward a suggestion, and follow-up with research and a recommendation. These are on contract.

“There is no way to measure how many firefighters’ lives this one individual’s suggestion will save,” said Fire Chief Phil Boriskie. “ But, no doubt, as a result of this one individual, all Houston firefighters, for many years to come, will have an increased likelihood of finding an escape route from the dark, smoky environments in which we risk our lives every day.”

- New Improved Thermal Imaging Cameras to be placed on Engine companies (older models are currently on all HFD ladder companies) The new cameras are funded by a Homeland Security Grant of \$560,000.00 and should delivered to HFD this week.
- Houston FD EZ-Radiocom II” units - voice amplifiers that attach to a handheld radio through a PTT (push to talk) switch and are attached to the SCBA mask to enhance fire ground communications. These new units have been in the stations for about a week and were also funded by an Homeland Security Grant.